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Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory

Security Council
Sixty-ninth year

Identical letters dated 24 July 2014 from the Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Security Council

In less than 24 hours since my letter to you yesterday, more than 120 Palestinians, including 10 members of one family, have been killed by the Israeli occupying forces. The death toll now stands at more than 790 Palestinians killed, the majority of them children and women, and more than 5,000 persons injured, as Israel, the occupying Power, continues its bloody aggression against the Palestinian civilian population in the besieged Gaza Strip.

Today, Israel, the occupying Power, proved yet again its absolute disregard for human life and the rules of international humanitarian law intended to prevent such military assaults against civilians. Once again, the Israeli occupying forces have targeted a school of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), causing more deaths and injuries among already-traumatized civilians displaced from their homes and sheltering in the school, including many who were demanded by the occupying Power in earlier days to leave their residential areas. It is imperative to recall that during Israel's 2008-2009 war on Gaza, Israeli tanks shelled an area outside an UNRWA school in Jabaliya refugee camp, killing 42 people and injuring dozens, a crime in which the occupying Power deliberately targeted areas and buildings housing the largest number of civilians, but for which Israel has never been held accountable.

Witnesses have reported that Israeli artillery shelling hit the school in Beit Hanoun in broad daylight. This attack on a clearly marked United Nations installation, for which the occupying Power had the exact coordinates and information that the school was sheltering civilians, resulted in the killing of at least 17 Palestinians and injuries to more than 200 displaced persons sheltering there. This is the fourth time in two days that Israeli occupying forces have bombed schools serving as shelters in the besieged Gaza Strip; those incidents include the firing on a girls' school in Maghazi refugee camp, where hundreds of displaced

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Palestinians had been sheltering. In this regard, at the time of writing of this letter, more than 148,000 Palestinians are sheltering in UNRWA schools in Gaza, seeking safety from Israel's military onslaught and suffering from the dire humanitarian circumstances.

We strongly condemn Israel's attack on the UNRWA school in Beit Hanoun and the killing of innocent civilians, who believed that they and their children would be safe under the United Nations flag. We demand an immediate, impartial and thorough investigation into this grave incident in order to establish accountability and bring the perpetrators of this crime to justice. Such grave breaches of international humanitarian law and such gross violations of the inviolability of United Nations premises must not remain unpunished.

As the list of Israeli crimes grows by the minute, I am compelled to share some of the horrifying details emerging from Gaza under Israel's assault since our last letter to you. It must be borne in mind that this does not represent an exhaustive list of the crimes being deliberately perpetrated by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people at the present moment:

- Israeli occupying forces killed at least 10 members of the Al-Astal family, including three children — Amin Tha'er Al-Astal (age 3), Nada Tha'er Al-Astal (age 5) and Mohammed Ismail Al-Astal (age 17) — in two separate attacks on civilian homes in Khan Younis in southern Gaza.
- Israeli occupying forces killed five members of the Abu Aita family, including an 11-year-old boy in Jabaliya in northern Gaza. Among the dead were Ibrahim Abdullah Abu Aita (age 67), Jamila Salim Abu Aita (age 65), Ahmad Ibrahim Abdullah Abu Aita (age 30) and Adham Ahmad Abu Aita (age 11).
- Israeli occupying forces targeted a motorbike with a missile from a warplane in 'Absan to the east of Khan Younis, killing four Palestinians, including a child, Baker Al-Najjar (age 13).
- Israeli occupying forces shelled 'Absan and Bani Suheila in Khan Younis district, killing seven Palestinians.
- Yazid Sa'ed Al-Batsh (age 23) succumbed to his wounds, tragically adding yet another member of the Al-Batsh family to the casualties resulting from Israeli shelling of their home on 14 July.
- Amir Adel Siyam (age 13) was among others who were killed by an Israeli raid on Rafah.
- Hadi Abdulhamid Abdulnabia (age 1) was killed in Jabaliya.
- In the farming village of Khuza'a, near Khan Younis, at least 25 civilians are believed dead and 16 wounded. Two thirds of the homes have been destroyed and 60 per cent of the population has fled, while the rest are prevented from leaving by ongoing attacks and sniper fire.
- Of the Palestinians killed, three were UNRWA staff: a 55-year-old woman who had served UNRWA for 20 years, who was killed in an attack on 20 July in which her husband and the youngest of her six daughters were injured; a 30-year-old UNRWA teacher, who was killed after fleeing the violence in Shuja'iya and as she was sheltering at her sister's home, which was bombed in an attack on 21 July that killed 10 other family members; and a 40-year-old

UNRWA teacher, who was killed on 23 July at the Zaitoun school emergency shelter, where he was assisting displaced Palestinians.

- As medical facilities continue to be targeted by the occupying forces, at least three hospitals have now been forced to evacuate their patients following Israeli strikes, causing overcrowding in other hospitals, such as Nasser hospital in Khan Younis, which is struggling to cope. In addition, the depletion of essential medicines and medical supplies has reached critical levels.

Even though international and regional efforts continue in the region, the international community is duty-bound to take the measures necessary to bring an immediate end to this Israeli military onslaught against the defenceless Palestinian civilian population in Gaza. Too many innocent lives have been lost to this barbaric, inhumane aggression. Moreover, the international community must exert the pressure necessary to compel the occupying Power to lift the illegal blockade, by which it has wilfully inflicted a humanitarian disaster in Gaza for more than eight years, affecting every single man, woman and child and every single dimension of life.

With regard to international efforts, we note and welcome the convening of the special session of the Human Rights Council on the human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, which was held yesterday, 23 July, in Geneva, and at which the Council adopted a resolution in which it decided to establish an independent, international commission of inquiry to investigate all violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

We wish to highlight the statement made before the Human Rights Council by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navi Pillay, in which she expressed deep concern over possible Israeli "war crimes" in Gaza and said that:

> A number of incidents, along with the high number of civilian deaths, belies the claim that all necessary precautions are being taken. ... People — particularly the elderly, sick and those with disabilities — are not given sufficient time to scramble out of their homes. When they do manage to run out into the street, there is nowhere to hide and no way of knowing where the next shell or missile will land.

We remain persistent and relentless in our call on the Security Council to shoulder its responsibilities and exert all efforts to bring about an immediate, durable ceasefire, put an end to the illegal eight-year blockade and provide protection for the Palestinian people. Every moment that this remains elusive means the deaths of scores of Palestinians, the destruction of more Palestinian civilian infrastructure, a worsening in the already dire humanitarian situation and the deepening of wounds and the intensification of rage among generations of Palestinians. This tragedy underscores, yet again, the need for urgent and serious efforts by all concerned to address the underlying causes of this crisis and the root causes of the conflict as a whole, if the international community truly ever wants to achieve an end to this conflict, which is the source of such great instability and turmoil, and a just and lasting peace among the Palestinian and Israeli peoples.

This letter is in follow-up to our 510 letters regarding the ongoing crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, which constitutes the territory of the State of Palestine. These letters, dated from 29 September 2000

(A/55/432-S/2000/921) to 23 July 2014 (A/ES-10/643-S/2014/519) constitute a basic record of the crimes being committed by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people since September 2000. For all of these war crimes, acts of State terrorism and systematic human rights violations being committed against the Palestinian people, Israel, the occupying Power, must be held accountable and the perpetrators must be brought to justice.

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the text of the present letter distributed as a document of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 5, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Riyad **Mansour**
Ambassador
Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations